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SUBMISSION TO PANEL ON

CONSULTATION AND ASSESSMENT

Nellie J. Cournoyea

Evidence presented  
on behalf of  
COPE

Berger Inquiry - Delta Phase  
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The Berger Pipeline Inquiry, as we understand it, is of major importance to the Inuit of the Western Arctic. It is supported by the native people. They have trust and faith in the process. This inquiry is considered unique in the history of government intervention in the north. It is supported for many reasons, some difficult to express. For the first time this Inquiry sets out a legal forum to finally bring together the past and present as it relates to the future survival of the Inuvialuit in the face of massive petroleum development. We approve of this Inquiry's terms of reference to hear evidence not only on the actual gas pipeline, but also to listen to evidence as it relates to the location of the gas fields, on and off-shore drilling and the gas processing plants. These broad terms of reference are reasonable since we will have to live with the end product in its entirety, not just a pipeline.

It is on this basis that COPE made the decision to take part in this Inquiry, and Mr. Berger, it is one of the main reasons that COPE was organized in 1969. We were trying to deal with a very fast pace of setting of priorities and introduction of individual programs that would come to this land and would directly affect the Inuit that





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live here. With your Inquiry, we are not dealing as we have in the past with the two major forces changing our lives, government and the Petroleum Industry - working hand in hand. It is our misfortune that DINA, the department that represents the government's responsibility for the people, is also a participant in and supporter of petroleum development.

These gigantic forces put together make Inuvialuit hopes look very small. Our interests look even smaller when the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development also answers to the big stick called the "National Interest". There are no real checks and balances in the decision making processes affecting our lives. When the Government and Industry speak of trade offs, they are in fact saying they will take or destroy what we have in return for things we don't want or things that have proven in the past to have negative value.

Since the first seismic was done 20 years ago in the Delta, Inuit have watched with curiosity. Questions brought forth about the programs received no answers as all decisions or non-decisions were made in a far away place called Ottawa. There was no one who seemed to know what was going on.

In later years when it seemed apparent that the exploration programs would not go away and more and more cutlines were seen, native peoples began to press for some control and say about what went on in their land.





It was at this time that the consultation process began and what could have been a very meaningful thing became the biggest game in town - becoming more slippery and sophisticated as the years went by.

In contrast to this, the Berger Inquiry is looked upon as a means for native people to really be heard and really be listened to. Finally their voices, ideas and opinions and rights are to be reflected in the recommendations that are put forth before this massive project will bring enough "others" to give us one more handicap - native people will be a minority people in their own land. All of the expectations we have of your Inquiry may be too much. However, we hope to finally get a total picture presented to see what this land and its people will have to endure in the future.

Because it deals with the whole picture, the native people are relying on this Inquiry to fully listen to all the people. We feel comfortable because there is no real time constraint, and we feel we understand. The fact that we are dealing with one person who can be seen and will be accountable for the recommendations when they are put forth is a drastic change from the kinds of consultation we have experienced in the past. As for the past and present record of the government we never know or are sure with what or whom we are dealing. After we have been consulted we usually wonder why the official or group came to consult with us and what it was doing. The Government's terms and references continually change. Confusion about their commitment to





meaningful consultation, which we are speaking of now, has not changed. The government and petroleum industry are always seen in the role of selling something. If they listen, most times it is to use our words against us or say we are wrong for the way we feel about the things we know. In the more recent consultations there are threats used. People are played against each other, communities against communities. This is often done by half truths or totally inaccurate information or misrepresentation. When the final nail is driven, no one is accountable. There is always another department, government official, agent, sub-contractor who claims not to know the policy stated by their superiors or by the group who consulted with the people.

The information tours and consultations are carried out swiftly and most of the time their purpose and arrival is announced at the last minute. The Western Arctic has become so saturated with information or mis-information. These endless meetings go nowhere causing frustration and anxiety to the point that native people do not know what to believe and are always left drained by having to react with incomplete information after the real decisions are made. The people say the same things over and over again. Consultation doesn't work because no one even listens to what we say. We know that priorities and policies are being shaped and set by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development without our knowledge. This has been true in the past and we see no hope





policy.

important for you to consider this pattern of  
information and information, what it is being used for  
the affects are. It has caused the biggest  
impact of hydrocarbon development to date. It  
native peoples face hostile rejection, daily suff-  
insults to their intelligence and their traditions  
them feeling insecure, unworthy and dependent.

we are asked for our knowledge or opinion we  
our expectations that our influence will be seen  
final outcome. We have fed our knowledge and  
into government agencies over game laws, town  
housing, education, business or whatever, hoping  
meaningful decisions and planning. You can search  
but nowhere in the final outcome can you ever  
contribution used for our benefit. It has only  
because of concerted political pressure that a very few  
such as training and employment of native peoples  
place.

the peak of native peoples' political influence  
Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Devel-  
Jean Chretien presented to the Canadian public his  
Northern Policy Paper. We can find no examples of these  
being implemented or even influencing the routine  
activities of his department. "Trade offs"  
made at every level of policy and administration.





In every trade off native peoples still take all the risks and suffer the ultimate consequences and never stand to gain.

What we expect from the consultation and information process we engage in, is to have some say in how "Trade offs" are made. It is very important for native peoples to be fully informed of the issues and their consequences. We want to know how long seismic programs will last, how long construction of gas plants will last, how long drilling programs on and off-shore will last, how long the construction of the pipeline will last. We want to know what the real costs and the real benefits are in the long term. These sales talks on employment for the children and for the future as a result of the pipeline, which are promoted as the salvation of our people have to be closely scrutinized. The present system of checks and balances which control our land and our lives is not working. This causes severe anxiety to native peoples, personally, socially, economically and politically. The threats that are used by the government and industry to try to get the approval they want must cease. We must get away from dealing with side issues and piecemeal looks at development.

In conclusion, because the checks and balances in the control of our lives are none existent, the native peoples must realize their just claims legally, politically and economically before this major development proceeds. Otherwise, no matter what promises are made, we will only continue in the same pattern to the detriment and discouragement of native peoples.





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Manager of CHAK, Inuvik, 1971-75, previously announcer-operator.

Presently land claims negotiator for Western Arctic (Inuit Tapirisat of Canada).

Board of Directors of COPE since 1970.

Board of Directors of Canadian Council on Social Development since 1975.

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Member of Ingamo Hall Committee since 1971.

